

# MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

## DECEMBER 15, 2008

### MINUTES – Meeting in Newton City Hall – Cafeteria

**PRESENT:** Jane Brown, Rob Caruso (Co-Chair), Lucie Chansky, Jini Fairley, Rosemary Larking, Girard Plante, Doug Sweet (Co-Chair)  
**REGRETS:** Barbara Lischinsky, Heather Platt, Jason Rosenberg  
**STAFF:** Bev Droz (Human Services), Kathleen Cahill (Planning & Development)  
**GUESTS:** Donald Larking

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Note: We gathered at 6:30pm for a holiday party.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05pm and chaired by Rob Caruso.

**Minutes from Nov. 17 meeting.** It should state that the FHTF is seeking to become a permanent body and that Doug was working on (not finished) a letter to the Clerk.

J. Brown made a motion to accept the minutes with those 2 changes, and L. Chansky seconded the motion. The Committee voted 7-0-0 to approve the minutes as amended.

#### Open Meeting Law

Girard and Doug raised issue of not voting in front of petitioners. Girard gave a description of what happened at the 11/17/08 meeting with Ald. Merrill there advocating for the HP space for Dunn Gaherin at 344 Elliot Street. It became difficult for members to feel free to further discuss and consider the situation. Bev explained that the Law Department has made it clear to all city departments, committees and commissions that meetings have to abide by the Open Meeting Laws. These laws allow people into any public meeting and they can stay through a meeting while members of that entity discuss and vote on business. Doug said that we could have a policy to table any voting to a future meeting. Some were concerned that this would inconveniently delay those items needing a timely decision. It was also noted that even if we tabled making decisions to a follow-up meeting, that meeting is still public and the parties interested can come back and listen. Doug thought they'd be less apt to do so but if they want to come back, they can. There was further general discussion and Doug reiterated that MCPD policy should be to table decisions to a next meeting. He said we can make exception to policy due to legitimate need, such as time sensitivity.

*(Foot note: In any public meeting, the sponsoring entity can state up front that there will be a time for public comments, and then announce when that period of time is over. Then the committee members can move forward with their discussions and votes without the public attendees interrupting.)*

#### CDBG Access Project Status Report – presented by Kathleen Cahill

This report was submitted to MCPD by email before this meeting for their review. Per usual it is included here within the minutes. Discussion notes follow each topic.

- **Accessible Pedestrian Signals** (Project CD0703C. Expended, \$28,620; Budget balance: \$13,530). The installation of APS-10 audible pedestrian signals at the intersections of Walnut and Cabot and Beacon and Chestnut, Commonwealth Avenue by St. Ignatius and Beacon and Hammond St. near McElroy Commons was completed in November. Centre St. and Centre Ave. is a priority intersection; however that is on-hold until pending a final

decision by the Newton Corner Advisory Committee on VHB conceptual plans. Washington St. and Commonwealth Ave. is another priority intersection. VHB is currently doing the design work for this intersection. Hopefully the project will include accessible pedestrian signals funded from traffic mitigation funds. Other priority locations submitted to traffic engineering include: Washington and Beacon as well as Washington St. by Newton-Wellesley Hospital.

Discussion &/or notes:

APS at Beacon and Washington: Kathleen's experience was that the APS never went on for three to five signal changes. It was pouring rain so she will go back to try again. Doug says it's a short cycle. Kathleen has spoken to Clint and will follow-up.

Doug mentioned Washington and Hillside in West Newton Square. He gets half across Washington St. when the chirp stops. He can't hear it and therefore there is no beacon to follow. Kathleen said it is suppose to be three seconds per foot but members disagreed that it was.

Kathleen attended the Newton Corner Advisory Committee meeting last Tuesday. They discussed scenarios about Center Ave and Center Street and Richardson Street. One idea is a Pedestrian Actualized System - with yellow caution lights. They are meeting again on Jan. 13 (Tuesday) at Evans Park Assisted Living. Jini brought up the need to have a blind person be a part of the planning. Doug reminded Kathleen of the noise level there due to the pike and that the signals should be louder. There are a few days after installation to test it out and make changes. Kathleen said they'd be looking at curb cut funding. There are various problems given the island that is there.

There were no updates for Washington St. and Commonwealth Ave. Kathleen will check with Amy to see who is overseeing it.

- **Norumbega Gardens** (Project CD0903B. Expended: \$7,999 Budget balance, \$48,640). Project includes accessible improvements to interior pathways in the Norumbega Garden Apartments, a complex operated by the Housing Authority. Work began September 16, 2008, 100% complete (on time--November 1<sup>st</sup>). Still awaiting final labor bills.

Discussion &/or notes:

Girard had visited and noticed spray painted blue lines where they had dug up areas, and a cone was sitting in a hole in the parking lot.

Doug brought up an issue at Oris and Lexington Street in Auburndale. A gas company has left a big hole with only cones around it. It's very dangerous. Some one could fall in. There was discussion about who in city sets the policy for situations like this and how is it enforced?

- **Charlesbank Playground** (Project CD0903C. Expended: \$0 Budget balance, \$30,000). Project includes the installation of a ramped concrete walkway with metal handrails, designed to complement new play equipment, benches, and picnic tables and allow access through the park.
- **Coletti-Magni Park** (Project CD0903D. Expended: \$30,000.00 Budget balance, \$0). Project includes installation of accessible sidewalks around the park's perimeter as well as an accessible ramp and drinking fountain. Work began September 2, 2008, accessible

pathways, water fountain, and ramp all installed. Project 100% complete.

Discussion &/or notes:

The final punch list has been sent to the contractor. The fence needs some ornamental changes and the lawn will be seeded in the spring.

- **Curb Cuts** (Project CD0903G, Expended \$58,689 Budget balance, \$27,400). Funds were used to complete the following curb cuts: Auburn and Washington (4/widening of island) Mason-Rice (6), Temple and Myrtle (2), JFK Circle (2). Committee earmarked remaining funds for curb cuts on Everett and Gibbs and Sumner and Gibbs in Newton Centre. Construction on these curb cuts will begin in the fall.
- **Retrofitting Curb Cuts** (Project CD0903E, Budget balance, \$6,000). A list of 7 locations (Homer Street, Beacon St. @ Dalton, Centre Green @ Langley, 1188 Centre Green, 82 Lincoln Street, 100 Walnut Street, 28 Commonwealth St) (19 curb cuts) have been identified by committee members and staff. Work will take place in November.
- **FY09 Funds** (Project CD0903A. \$15,045) – *This project represents funds available for project(s) to be determined.*

Discussion &/or notes:

Kathleen reported being approached by Parks & Recreation Commissioner Towle asking if we additional funds for FY09. We have the \$15K left as noted above. She said that DPW came-in under budget for Norumbega so we may get some funds back but there's no guarantee. Carol Schein had another project for Parks & Rec.

Kathleen also has heard from Health & Human Services Commissioner Naparstek regarding resurfacing the ramp at the Health Department building at 1294 Centre Street either in FY09 or FY10. Bev described the situation: he had a study done and it will take \$0.5million to upgrade the building, and lengthen the ramp to make it compliant regarding slope. However there is no money, and there is no place to length the ramp without investing a lot of funds in reconstructing the outside. Meanwhile the existing ramp is a danger to anyone using it because of its disrepair. He is hoping to get a variance and at a minimum, re-pave the ramp and fix the railings so that no one will be hurt. Kathleen will check the slope and check with AAB. Rosemary said to check the door and that their bushes stick out into the walkway. Members felt that if they need a variance, we'll have to discuss it.

Rob asked if any of the \$15 k could be used for retrofitting of curb cuts with tactile material and Kathleen said yes.

### **FY 2010 Funding Process**

Kathleen sent out proposal applications for CDBG Access Funding, and they are due 1/9/09. She sent them to a variety of departments, the NHA, and to the Human Services Providers Network (various non profit agencies that receive CDBG funds) still overseen by Lowell Haynes. She had one inquiry from Charles River ARC.

The application starts with a description of what's available, eligibility and requirement information, examples of recent projects, and it describes the MCPD. It then asks for their

organization info, project description and funding parameters, what the accomplishments will be, and the project budget and staff capacity.

Then there is a CDBG Proposal Application Evaluation Form FY10. This is the worksheet that is used in the review of all submitted applications. It is provided to the applicants just for their information so they will better understand the process.

Kathleen said MCPD is under deadline to review funding before the Planning & Development meeting on Feb. 4, so we'll need to review it at our Jan. 26 meeting. Kathleen said we might need to meet two times in January.

Jini asked what percentage of the total CDBG funds we use for curb cuts. Kathleen thought 30% but it was noted that there's less overall CDBG funds.

Kathleen will try to send out applications on Jan. 14 for the Committee's review so that we will be prepared for the 1/26 meeting. At the 1/26 meeting, if there's a lot of applicants, we'll have to establish a strict timeline.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Mass Access**

Kathleen mentioned that Mass Access is a free online program that matches people with disabilities with accessible housing in the community. Mass Access recently updated their website and expanded their database of all affordable rental housing in Massachusetts. The registry is located at: <http://www.massaccesshousingregistry.org>

### **Spotter after Snow Plowing**

Jini suggested hiring someone like a spotter to check on the curb cuts after snowplowing. It falls under the removal of debris. The spotter would provide businesses located on street corners a letter that reminds them about anything that impedes accessibility and therefore reminds them to be sure the curb cuts are shoveled and passable. Rob has the ordinance copy that spells out the responsibilities of business owners.

### **DPW Snow Meeting**

Doug and Kathleen went to the DPW "Snow" Meeting on 12/3/2008. Steve Tocci reinforced plowing protocol with contractors but who knows what will happen.

### **Union Church in Waban**

The Union Church located in Waban had done a lot of fund raising and work to install an elevator to make the building handicap accessible. They had a dedication ceremony on Sunday, Dec. 14 which was attended by the Mayor and other officials. Doug attended on behalf of the MCPD.

There was a motion to adjourn at 8:50 pm.

**The next meeting will be on Monday, January 26, 2009 at 6:30pm in the cafeteria.**

(Note: Jan. 19 is a holiday and there are no rooms available Jan. 21.)

Respectfully submitted by Beverly Droz